



Nuclear Energy Information Service

Illinois' Nuclear Power Watchdog since 1981

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PRESS RELEASE

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EAST-COAST EARTHQUAKE CENTERED NEAR NORTH ANNA NUCLEAR POWER STATION

"Loss of offsite power" causes emergency shutdown of reactors, initial reports say

CHICAGO-- An earthquake reported to be of magnitude between 5.8 and 6.0 struck in Virginia today.

The epicenter of the quake is reported to be near Mineral, Virginia. This town is the local address for the twin North Anna nuclear reactors. Each of the Westinghouse pressurized-water reactors (PWRs) generates about 975 mW of power. They are owned and operated by Dominion Virginia Electric & Power Co. (VEPCo).

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission website showed the reactors operating at 100% power today. However, reports from staff at Beyond Nuclear in Takoma park, MD, indicate:

"NRC Operations center not answering phone. NRC Office of Public Affairs you are immediately put on hold--- no public affairs officers available. Sounds busy at NRC. Epicenter is being reported on CNN as Mineral, VA which is where the two reactors for North Anna are located," according to reactor specialist Paul Gunter of Beyond Nuclear.

"It would appear that Mother Nature does not intend to wait the 18 months suggested by three NRC Commissioners to 'study' whether or not to implement plans their Fukushima study team says should be implemented now," notes Dave Kraft, director of the Chicago-based Nuclear Energy Information Service.

He was referring to the results of the special NRC 90-day Fukushima study team, which made recommendations for actions based on lessons-learned to date from the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan:

<http://pbadupws.nrc.gov/docs/ML1118/ML111861807.pdf>

The Report released July 12th engendered controversy when three NRC Commissioners recommended delay in implementing some of the findings, pending more study, despite the over 120 years of cumulative experience in the issues the NRC staff specialists were asked to investigate.

A preliminary report from CNN indicates that NRC now states that "North Anna experienced an automatic "SCRAM" (emergency shutdown) **due to loss of offsite power**....All emergency diesel generator power systems kicked in as needed," according to the initial reports.

This is the same issue that has undergone intense scrutiny among nuclear advocates and critics alike in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. Loss of offsite power was the final nail sealing the fate of the four Fukushima reactors and spent fuel pools that ultimately caught fire, exploded and melted down. It is an issue of contention at U.S. reactors in light of the Fukushima experience.

Information will be updated as it becomes available.